



SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON THURSDAY 28TH JULY 2005 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor K.V. Reynolds - Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs C. Forehead, D.M. Gray, K. James, A.S. Williams and T.J. Williams

Together with:

T. Peppin (Head of Policy and Central Services), J. Jones (Scrutiny Co-ordinator) and S. Hopkins (Scrutiny Research Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.T. Davies, Ms E.E. Forehead, Ms A. Morgan and Mrs R. Passmore.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES 16TH JUNE 2005 AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes were moved and approved as accurate. Mr Jones stated that all outstanding actions had been completed:

- ACTION – Future minutes of Scrutiny Management Panel to be page numbered
This has been completed
- ACTION – In addition to the annual forward programmes of work, from September 2005 detailed Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes are to be published by the Scrutiny Support Unit
This has been completed and is at Agenda Item No. 5

2. SCRUTINY TRAINING PROGRAMME

Mr Jones outlined the background of the report. Members were informed that in order to support the recent changes to the scrutiny function, the Scrutiny Support Unit (SSU) would be facilitating a series of training courses for members, officers and co-opted members of scrutiny committees. Mr Jones explained that by inviting officers and members to the same course the SSU aimed to bring together a common understanding of the goals of scrutiny.

Mr Jones stated that from September 2005 to March 2006, the one-day course would be held

on a monthly basis at the Stables training facility in Ystrad Fawr. The aim of the course would be to outline the changes to the scrutiny function and to reinforce scrutiny skills in attendees.

The Panel was informed that the programme for the training day was a mixed learning approach, using presentation and group work to aid understanding and give a working knowledge of the scrutiny function. Members were invited to comment on the draft training programme.

Cllr A Williams stated that training was essential in achieving the Panel's aim of moving scrutiny forward in Caerphilly, and expressed a hope that all scrutiny members would attend.

Cllr Reynolds asked to which level of officers the invitations had been extended. Mr Jones stated that the invitation had been cascaded to all officers who are involved in the scrutiny function whether directly or indirectly, or who would like to learn more about the function.

Dr Peppin told the group that the provision of scrutiny training was a step towards making people think differently. The Cabinet Forward Programme had started the process by making people plan ahead, and the practice disseminated at the training would similarly influence the working practices and attitudes of attendees.

The Scrutiny Management Panel agreed that the draft training programme for the 'Introduction to Scrutiny' training course was a good way forward for the development and promotion of the scrutiny function.

3. CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY SELF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Mrs Hopkins outlined the report. Members were informed that the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) was established to promote scrutiny across all tiers of government, via the four principles of good public scrutiny:

- Effective public scrutineers should provide a 'critical friend' challenge to executives as well as external public bodies and agencies
- Effective public scrutineers should reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- Effective public scrutineers should take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
- Effective public scrutineers should make an impact on the delivery of public services

Members were informed that the CfPS had recently introduced a self-evaluation framework as a means for local authorities to measure the success of scrutiny and to pinpoint areas for future improvement, using the four principles above.

Mrs Hopkins reminded members about the South East Wales Scrutiny Champions Network meeting that had been hosted by CCBC in March 2005. She stated that the key success factors for scrutiny identified by the Network had closely correlated with the four CfPS principles, and for this reason it was proposed that the CfPS framework be used by the SSU as a tool for evaluating the scrutiny function in the 2005-2006 annual report, and beyond. Mr Jones added that annual reviews of the function, which identified strengths and areas for improvement, were essential to the future development of scrutiny.

Mr Jones told the Panel that he envisaged the framework being completed by the SSU, Scrutiny Management Panel, Corporate Management Team, elected members etc in order to gauge an all user perspective. However, it was emphasised that as a basis for future SSU annual reports, the qualitative data gleaned from using the framework would also be supplemented with quantitative data e.g. number of reports presented to Scrutiny Committees within the timescales set within the Forward Work Programme, number of Task and Finish

Group recommendations approved by Cabinet/ implemented in directorates etc.

Cllr Reynolds sought clarification that the use of the self-evaluation framework was voluntary. When this was confirmed, Cllr Reynolds commended the SSU for bringing the framework to the panel as it indicated the determination to further the scrutiny function in CCBC. Cllr T Williams agreed, stating that self-evaluation shows a commitment to making scrutiny work by identifying areas for improvement. Dr Peppin added that although the CfPS framework was a lengthy document, to complete it and gain an insight into areas of success and areas for improvement would be time well spent. Mr Jones stated that as well as feeding the results into the SSU annual report, the results and Caerphilly experience would also be fed back year on year to the CfPS.

Cllr James stated that he supported the idea of self-evaluation in principle, but queried whether the CfPS framework was the most appropriate tool for the job. Mr Jones reiterated that there had been remarkable parallels with the CfPS principles in the identification of priorities at the South East Wales Scrutiny Champions Network in March, and as such the SSU were confident that the framework is the best way forward at present. Mrs Hopkins added that as the use of the framework was voluntary, the document could be altered with experience and use to tailor it to the needs of Caerphilly County Borough Council.

Mr Jones informed the Panel that if the use of the CfPS framework was approved, the next steps would be to look at the implementation of the evaluation and who would be involved. He proposed that a consultation report exploring the implementation issues be drafted by SSU for presentation at the next Scrutiny Management Panel for approval before presentation at Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed this course of action.

- ACTION – CfPS self-evaluation framework follow-up work to be undertaken by SSU and reported at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel

4. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2005-2006

Mr Jones outlined the background to the report. Members were reminded that at the meeting of the Panel on 16th June it was agreed that Scrutiny Committee's traditional annual forward work programmes only provided a brief outline of some of the reports that were expected to come forward to Scrutiny Committees and therefore were not definitive.

At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel members agreed that scrutiny committees would publish an annual outline forward work programme containing the regular cyclical reports (e.g. quarterly budget monitoring reports, performance management reports etc) and a comprehensive rolling 12 weekly forward programme published in line with the cabinet forward work programme.

Mr Jones informed members that the draft outline for the 12 week programme from 6th September to 22nd November (which was attached as an appendix to the report) was subject to change pending discussion with Directors and contributions from elected members. Mr Jones assured the Panel that he would liaise with Directors to ensure that only key strategic issues are included in each forward programme, to ensure agendas didn't become too cumbersome.

The Panel were told that the finalised work programme for each Scrutiny Committee would be distributed as a for information item on the Scrutiny Committee agendas on a quarterly basis, and would be published on the intranet and internet.

The Scrutiny Management Panel agreed that an integrated cabinet/scrutiny forward programme would improve the operation of the scrutiny function.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr Forehead raised the issue of exempt Cabinet items being called for discussion at Scrutiny Committees, and being approved and implemented prior to Scrutiny Committee presentation. Mr Jones stated that with the advent of integrated forward work programming, this scenario should cease as key issues will come forward for pre-decision scrutiny as a matter of course.

Mr Jones stated that the Panel had been in existence for a little over a year, and expressed his thanks to all members of the Scrutiny Management Panel for their commitment to moving the scrutiny function forward in CCBC, and for their clear steer to the work of the Scrutiny Support Unit.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were informed that due to unforeseen circumstances, the 2005 dates for SMP (sent to members on 26th May) had been cancelled. Due to other conflicting appointments, it was agreed that the date of the next meeting be re-arranged.

- ACTION – Mrs Hopkins to reschedule next meeting of SMP and inform members accordingly